

# **Washington State Executive Ethics Board**

2425 Bristol Court SW, PO Box 40149, Olympia WA 98504-0149

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## **Ethics in Public Service RCW 42.52**

### **Background**

The Executive Ethics Board (the Board) was created in 1994 by legislation at the request of the Governor and Attorney General. The law went into effect on January 1, 1995.

The Board is comprised of five members appointed by the Governor and serve five year terms:

- State Exempt Employee
- State Classified Employee
- Recommended by State Auditor
- Recommended by Attorney General
- Member at large.

### **Roles of the Members**

The members have statutory responsibility to:

- Develop training materials
- Adopt rules
- Issue advisory opinions
- Investigate and hear complaints
- Impose penalties for violations
- Recommend suspension or other disciplinary action

### **Violations and Penalties**

If the Board determines that a state employee or officer violated the ethics law, they can order the following:

- Penalties up to \$5,000 per violation
- Damages sustained by the State
- Investigative Costs

### **Staff**

The agency is staffed by members of the Office of the Attorney General and is comprised of an Executive Director, Administrative Officer and two Investigators. They are charged with:

- Issuing non-binding staff opinions
- Approving contracts for outside employment if with another state agency
- Investigating complaints – making recommendations to the Board
- Developing training materials and conducting training.

### **Issuing Non-Binding Staff Opinions**

Staff frequently receives questions from the public or state employees about a variety of topics. Staff provides answers to these questions in the form of a non-binding staff opinion. This is staff's best guess on how the Board would view the situation, and is based on Advisory Opinions and previously heard enforcement cases.

### **Approving Contracts for Outside Employment**

With a few exceptions, when a state employee contracts with another state agency to perform work, the employee must seek approval from the Board.

### **Investigating Complaints**

Staff investigates complaints that are submitted. If staff believes that a violation of the ethics law has occurred, they will submit the case before the Board. The Board members decide if the law was violated and what penalty should be assessed for the violation.

### **Training**

The Board has partnered with the Department of Personnel to provide training to state employees. The Board staff will provide Executive Management training as requested. Board staff also conducts Train-the-Trainer classes.